

North Point Pier Bulkhead Buildings  
The Embarcadero between Kearney and  
Beall Streets  
San Francisco  
San Francisco County  
California

HABS No. CA-2047

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. CA-2047

## NORTH POINT PIER BULKHEAD BUILDINGS

# 1, 3, 5, 9, 15, 19, 23, 29, 31, 33, 35, 39, and 41  
 A B C D E F G H I J K L M

Location: North of the Ferry Building along the Embarcadero between Kearney and Powell Streets, San Francisco, San Francisco County, California.

USGS San Francisco North Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 10.553320.4183110, 10.553750.4183540, 10.552080.4185220, 10.551650.4184790.

Present Owner: Port of San Francisco, Ferry Building, San Francisco, California 94111. (1977).

Present Occupant: Various commercial firms..

Present Use: Piers and docks for various commercial firms. The bulkhead buildings for Pier 39 and 41 are to be demolished by the Corps of Engineers, San Francisco for a major commercial/recreational complex.

Significance: The plans for the bulkhead buildings were stimulated by the influx of goods into San Francisco with the completion of the Panama Canal. The facades, conceived as gateways to the city, lent grandeur to an area once populated by "flimsy structures, destitute of the elements of permanency" (John P. Young, San Francisco: A History of the Pacific Coast Metropolis, 1912, Vol. II, p. 930).

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. History of Structures:

While San Francisco's waterfront escaped the 1906 earthquake, by 1910 the Board of State Harbor Commissioners started rebuilding the entire waterfront area. This action was prompted by the expectation that the completion of the Panama Canal would greatly increase shipping into San Francisco. In 1906 3.6 million tons entered San Francisco, by 1911 this number had almost doubled with 6.1 million tons entering the port. An anticipated 13 million tons per annum was expected by 1927. The master plan for the waterfront was first published in 1908 as a report by the Federated Harbor Improvement Association (an association of commercial, industrial, banking, real estate, labor, and civic associations). The report, San Francisco Harbor, Its Commerce

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and Docks with a Complete Plan for Development, was written by Luther Wagoner, an engineer. The implementation of the plan was started in 1910 when a nine million dollar bond issue was passed. The waterfront was divided into two stylistic zones, the bulkhead buildings south of the Ferry were given Mission or Mediterranean fronts (these buildings are not documented by this study), while those to the north were treated in a Renaissance Revival style. This plan guided the waterfront development from about 1910 to at least the 1930s. The project was implemented in phases; the piers closest to the Ferry Building generally were improved first, while the bulkhead buildings were sometimes added twenty years later.

B. Source of Information:

Washington, D.C. National Register of Historic Places. Determination of Eligibility File on "North Point Park Marina Eagle Cafe and Beaux-Arts Pier Facades." (by San Francisco District, Corps of Engineers)

Prepared by Mary Beth Betts  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
from research compiled by  
Randolph Delehanty  
Historian  
The Foundation for San  
Francisco's Architectural  
Heritage  
March 1977

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The waterfront area is composed of piers, sheds and bulkhead buildings. The facades of the bulkhead buildings form a row along the Embarcadero north of the Ferry Building between Kearney and Powell Streets. This progression of facades terminates with Pier 43, a free standing gate west of Pier 41. These large arches are often visible at the ends of the city streets.

The bulkhead buildings are of steel or wooden frame (timber framing was used from approximately 1910-20, steel in the later phases) with cement plaster molded to look like stones. Each bulkhead building has a main

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entrance composed of large arch with keystone and voussoir framing. This entrance is two stories with two or one-and-a-half story flanking pavillions. There is a battered pier on each side of the arch. This is capped by a pediment with a denticulated cornice. The pavillions have quoins and a similar row of blocks between the bays. The openings vary in shape, some being arched and others are flat. Where there are two stories, the second floor windows are grouped by fours.

Two of the bulkhead buildings, Pier 39 and Pier 41, are scheduled for demolition. Pier 39, built in 1913 is 938' long and 140' wide. The timber truss roofed shed seems to have been built in the early 1920s. The bulkhead building, added in 1931, has a steel frame with a cement plaster exterior. The style of the facade conforms to the description given earlier in the data. Pier 41 was built in 1914. The shed was added in 1918 and removed in 1974. The wooden frame, cement plaster bulkhead building was constructed in 1918. The style of the structure, again conforms to the general description with the exception that the cornice is plain.

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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Corps of Engineers, San Francisco District, in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort in the development of a major commercial/recreational complex. John A. Burns, AIA, was the HABS project coordinator. The historical and architectural data was based on research by Randolph Delehanty, Historian, The Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage. The data was edited in February 1979 by Mary Beth Betts in the HABS office. Photographs were taken in August and September, 1977 by Aaron Gallup.